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Adjustment to College and the Student Mentoring Programme

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Abstract

According to recent studies, the transition and adjustment to a higher level of education during the first year of college are influenced by various individual and environmental factors. The aim of this study was to observe the characteristics of first year students who decided to participate in the Student Mentoring Programme, designed to improve adjustment to college, and compare them to students who decided not to participate in the programme. A total of 230 first year students with an average age of 19.02 years participated in the study in which we observed differences regarding their initial adjustment (during the first month of college), personality and motivation. The majority of participants have stated that they enrolled into a college of their choice, expecting a better chance for employment after graduation. The predictors that proved significant in the initial adjustment of freshmen were: perceived competence, motivation for accomplishment, extraversion and agreeableness. This study also revealed that the majority of students who decided to participate in the Student Mentoring Programme are non-resident students, and that students seeking mentoring support had shown a more prominent fear of failure. Other observed variables showed no significant difference regarding the decision to participate in the mentoring programme.

The results of this study reveal some protective factors regarding the process of initial adjustment to college, offering guidelines for further development of mentoring programmes and research.

Key words: fear of failure; motivation; perceived competence; personality.

Introduction

Going to university is considered to be the first significant milestone in late adolescence and early adult age which introduces numerous changes and challenges for an individual. At the beginning of university life, one faces a new educational system demanding a higher level of knowledge and competence, diverse methods of evaluation and grading, and a higher level of independence and responsibility. Compared to an average high school, the student population of a university is often significantly more heterogeneous in its cultural and socio-economic background, and an average university class is often larger in comparison to high school classes. Such differences call for an adjustment to the new surroundings and for learning new behavioural and skill sets brought on by the new role.

Transition to a system of higher education is considered a normative life event which, depending on various individual and environmental factors, results in different emotional, social and academic adjustments (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). The theoretical background for explaining the quality of adjustment to university surroundings can be found in several theories within developmental psychology that explain the development of identity, cognitive, moral, or professional aspects of development in general. A theory that primarily focuses on psychological development of university students was developed by Chickering (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998); according to this theory, during a university education a young person develops new competences, emotional regulation, autonomy and mature interpersonal relationships. Students are expected to develop their identity and sense of purpose through defining their life goals, as well as to develop integrity by coordinating their own values and behaviours with social responsibilities (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Chickering's developmental model can be used as a template for developing strategies and programmes for students and focusing on better adjustment and personal growth and development.

One's adjustment to college is primarily correlated with one's academic achievement, although the analysis of academic adjustment can include not only the students' potential, but also their motivation for learning, sense of purpose and satisfaction with the academic environment (Baker & Siryk, 1984, Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Besides academic adjustment, Baker and Siryk (1984) also emphasize social adjustment which includes adjustment to social surroundings of an institution, creation of new social networks, recognition and acceptance of social support, and emotional adjustment, which has also proved important.

In a previous research which focused on the influence of the environment on students' development, Newcomb and Wilson (1969; Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998) found that a group influences an individual to achieve independence from parents and family, to set intellectual goals corresponding to the ones set by the institution. The group also offers emotional and interpersonal support, and covers all relevant segments which are not covered by the faculty.

Amongst the factors that determine one's adjustment to college, researchers also deal with issues of changing the place of residence, which is a common occurrence when going to university. Research suggests that non-residential students face separation issues related to departure from home, which can make the initial adjustment to university more difficult. When speaking of separation problems, early identification and intervention through a support network and peers can make the adjustment easier by increasing self-confidence and helping in better blending in the academic environment (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).

Research suggests that certain personality traits also correlate with the adjustment to the academic environment. Extraversion is considered to be desirable at lower levels of education, while at higher levels analytical, formal and more complex tasks are required, it becomes a distracting factor in terms of adjustment (Chamoro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003). Individuals that score higher on neuroticism tend to adjust worse, while there is no empirical data suggesting a correlation between agreeableness and academic achievement although the latter could be correlated with better social adjustment (Chamoro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003). Conscientiousness is the most important correlate of academic achievement, and a desirable trait throughout all levels of education (Chamoro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003, Smojver-Ažić et al., 2007).

College adjustment is also related to the level of student motivation. In the academic environment, students do not always function at the highest level of motivation, but the main goal is to achieve an individual's positive evaluation of learning and to consider academic activities as important and useful, which lowers the probability of frustration and quitting. A person with prominent *motivation for accomplishment* will choose a higher academic achievement as a personal goal, and also engage in studying and accomplishing relevant tasks. For some, accomplishment does not represent a challenge, rather it is perceived as a threat. Such individuals have a dominant *motivation for avoiding failure* which is manifested as a *fear of failure* in situations of accomplishment. Such individuals will most likely avoid situations for achievement (Kolić-Vehovec, 1999). This predisposition is surely an aggravating factor in adjustment to academic environment because of a significant number of everyday situations requiring engagement that leads to achievement.

Njus and Brockway (1999) reported that perceived competence is significantly correlated to student's adjustment. Perceived competence implies a sense of readiness for an efficient interaction with the environment. Considering that the onset of college is a stressful event for the majority of students, representing a new and previously unknown situation, it is assumed that achievement motivation and perceived competence, along with the sense of insecurity and the sense of threat, will be important factors of adjustment.

Besides individual student characteristics, the system of formal and informal support is also considered to be an important correlate of adjustment. Mentoring represents a form of formal support and is most often considered as support from a

more experienced individual to a less experienced individual or group with the goal of improving the personal and professional well-being of the individual being mentored (Jacobi, 1991). Although mentoring programmes are present in academic institutions, the number of empirical data on this subject is rather small, as is the number of theoretical frameworks regarding mentoring (Eby et al., 2007).

The system of mentoring in higher education is still not sufficiently present in Croatia, which can also be seen through terminology that is insufficiently differentiated. A mentor is often considered to be a person assigned to a student in the context of developing a graduate or post-graduate thesis, a person of a scientific and educational occupation and an expert in the area in which a student applies for the graduate or post-graduate thesis. According to the 1996 Higher Education Act, the mentor leads the candidate through the course of study, follows their work, guides and evaluates the candidate's progress. There is no term for a person being mentored and, accordingly, no rights and obligations resulting from that role are defined. Although the lack of terminology associated with mentoring could be one of the indicators of insufficient quantity of mentoring programmes in Croatia, that does not change the fact that the mentoring system is important. The mentoring system represents a form of psychosocial and professional support at different institutional levels, and provides personal and professional growth and development for both mentor and the person being mentored (Eby et al., 2007). In this context, mentoring systems represent a very successful system of support in students' adjustment to higher education, especially at the beginning of the study.

Different types of mentoring are mentioned in literature. With regard to the target group, we differentiate between mentoring children population, academic mentoring, and work environment mentoring. Academic mentoring is defined as a relationship between a member of the academic community and a student in which the mentor offers support and guidance to the student both academically (e.g. academic performance) and personally (e.g. personal issues, identity) (Jacobi, 1991; Eby et al., 2007). When considering the degree of structure, there is formal and informal mentoring (Underhill, 2006). Formal mentoring systems often recognize students that are at higher risk of negative academic-related behaviours, such as quitting college (Eby et al., 2007). Research has shown that mentoring is connected to desirable behavioural outcomes, positive attitudes towards the academic life, positive interpersonal relationships and with positive motivation outcomes which are related to seeking new experiences, setting high but obtainable goals and achieving outcomes that are important for an individual's personality. A mentor can use his experience to show a student different possibilities that a college offers, help to set goals, provide support and therefore encourage them to accomplish personal and professional growth and development.

Student Mentoring Programme

Realizing that students when going to college face new challenges and developmental tasks, affecting their college adjustment, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Rijeka offered its freshmen the possibility to participate in the Student Mentoring

Programme, initiated by senior students, with the help and support of the Faculty. Driven by numerous problems and uncertainties that freshmen face, a system of support was devised in order to make college adjustment easier and to enable the perception of academic surroundings as a place for personal growth and development. The idea of the programme is to provide support not only in the academic, but also social and emotional aspect of adjustment. The programme was designed in a way that senior students act as mentors to freshmen. Mentors worked with groups no bigger than four first- year students.

At the beginning of the programme, a series of initial workshops were held during which students got acquainted with the mentoring system, the existing practice of mentoring systems in higher education, and with their rights and obligations. Students of each mentoring group got to know each other, exchange their expectations, define their work areas and arrange future meetings. Future meetings were planned on a weekly basis, with duration of no less than one school hour, and with a possibility for additional electronic communication. The task of mentoring groups was to take notes on methods of work, questions and problems in order to modify the mentoring programme according to specific needs of students.

When considering the contribution to student support through mentoring relationships, most of the other research is more oriented towards mentoring outcomes for both mentors and individuals being mentored. This research is focused on characteristics of those students who express the need for mentoring at the beginning of college and with better college adjustment in mind, as opposed to those students who do not express the need for mentoring. Apart from that, the goal of this research was to determine the degree of adjustment of first year students of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Rijeka, the relation of the adjustment to motivational and personality variables, as well as their contributions to college adjustment.

Method

Participants

A total of 230 first-year students participated in this research, all of them attending the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Rijeka (177 female students, 52 male students), their age ranging from 18 to 23 (average age of 19.02).

The general information consisted of questions regarding reasons for enrolment to the Faculty, place of residence (home town) and its distance from the place in which they are attending the Faculty. A total of 31.7 % participants (N=72) reported that they are attending the Faculty in their place of residence. The rest of the participants, i.e. 68.3 % of them (N=155), had to change their place of residence in order to attend the Faculty. Most of the students (81.7 %) report that they enrolled because they are very interested in the subject and that there is a greater chance for employment after graduating (40.9 %). Students show a prevalence of intrinsic motives for enrolling, which is a solid foundation for an appropriate adjustment to faculty.

Instruments

The following instruments were used in this research:

1. *General information questionnaire* which consisted of questions regarding demographics: gender, age, faculty department, permanent residence, residence, reasons for enrolling and the decision to take part in the Student Mentoring Programme.

2. The *Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire* (SACQ; Baker & Syrik, 1984) – the version used was adapted to the student population in Croatia (Živčić-Bečirević, Smojver-Ažić, Kukić, & Jasprica, 2007), and it measured academic, social and emotional adjustments to college. Academic adjustment measures academic goals, college-oriented attitudes, motivation, learning habits and attendance of lectures. Social adjustment can be ascertained through involvement in various college activities, development and maintenance of relationships with colleagues. The quality of emotional adjustment reflects the amount of psychological or somatic symptoms of stress that students are experiencing. For the purpose of this research, the scale was reduced to 20 claims so that it could measure the initial adjustment to the academic environment. Items questioning academic functioning that required more extensive academic experience were omitted. Assessments were made on a Likert-type scale with 9 degrees. A higher score meant better adjustment.

3. *Big Five Inventory* (*Big Five Inventory*; John, Dohane, & Kentle, 1991) – a shorter, adjusted version was used. The inventory is derived from the five-factor personality theory which proposes 5 major personality traits: extroversion (8 items), agreeableness (9 items), conscientiousness (9 items), neuroticism (8 items) and openness (10 items) (Kardum, Gračanin, & Hudek-Knežević, 2006). A total of 44 items were assessed on a Likert-type scale with 4 degrees. The range of answers per subscale was within the range from 5 to 36, and a greater score pointed to a more prominent personality trait. The reliability analysis of internal consistency for our sample (Cronbach alpha), and for each factor offered the following results: 0.84 for extraversion, 0.74 for agreeableness, 0.83 for conscientiousness, 0.83 for neuroticism and 0.82 for openness.

4. *Costello Achievement Motivation Scale* (Lamovac, 1988). A shorter, translated and adapted version was used (Kolić-Vehovec, 1993), consisting of 16 items. The assessment was done on a 0-4 scale. The range of answers in this research was from 18 to 56, where a higher score meant higher achievement motivation. Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach alpha) in our sample was 0.75, which corresponded to the reliability of the student population.

5. *Incompetence Scale* (Bezinović, 1988) consisted of 10 claims; the assessment was done on a 0-3 Likert-type scale, with the range of answers for this research from 0 to 34 – a greater score corresponded to a greater doubt in one's own competence and abilities. Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach alpha) was 0.91 for our sample.

6. *Fear of Failure Scale* (SON, Kolić-Vehovec, 1993) consisted of 15 items; the assessment was done on a 0-4 Likert-type scale. The range of answers in this research

was from 0 to 51, and a greater score corresponded to a greater fear of failure. Internal consistency reliability (Cronbach alpha) was 0.90 for our sample.

Procedure

During the first week of classes, the first-year students in all departments were acquainted with the Student Mentoring Programme. After presenting the main guidelines of the Student Mentoring Programme, students were given a written abstract of those guidelines and an option to participate in the programme. The main objective of the Programme was explained: senior students will offer their support to first year students, helping them to make a smoother transition to academic life.

The research was conducted three to four weeks after the lectures had begun. The students filled in the questionnaires before or after their classes, or during breaks. All students were informed about the purpose of this research, the anonymity ethics, and were instructed how to fill in each questionnaire. Data collecting took between 20 and 30 minutes per department.

Results and Discussion

Out of 230 participants, 137 (59.56 %) decided to participate in the Student Mentoring Programme. Ten participants were omitted as they did not provide information on whether they decided to participate or not, hence all further analyses were performed on a sample of 220. Table 1 shows the descriptive data for all measurements used in the group of students who decided to participate in the Student Mentoring Programme, and those used in the group of students who decided not to participate in the Programme.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of each measured scale for participants and non-participants of the Student Mentoring Programme, and the results of t-test analysis.

| | Participation in the Student Mentoring Programme | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|-------|--------|-------|--------|
| | YES | | NO | | |
| Variables | M | SD | M | SD | t |
| Extraversion | 20.15 | 5.29 | 19.5 | 5.76 | 0.85 |
| Agreeableness | 24.01 | 4.43 | 23.7 | 5.35 | 0.47 |
| Conscientiousness | 21.38 | 5.30 | 21.77 | 5.63 | 0.51 |
| Neuroticism | 14.03 | 5.19 | 14.24 | 5.99 | 0.27 |
| Openness | 25.55 | 4.51 | 25.46 | 5.09 | 1.35 |
| Achievement motivation | 40.86 | 6.54 | 39.59 | 6.82 | 1.31 |
| Perceived (in)competence | 11.98 | 7.36 | 11.05 | 7.91 | 0.88 |
| Fear of failure | 24.34 | 10.24 | 20.61 | 9.94 | 2.66** |
| College adjustment | 136.77 | 19.47 | 137.49 | 22.19 | 0.26 |

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Students who decided to participate in the Student Mentoring Programme were, in terms of college adjustment, no different from students who decided not to participate.

It is possible that this is the result of a good initial adjustment. Research suggests that, in the initial phase, the majority of students share unrealistic expectations from their academic environment (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Such idealism is known as *the freshmen myth* (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994), which often leads to disappointment when such high expectations prove to be false. Students who share unrealistically high expectations are more likely to quit their studies, compared to ones who have more realistic expectations (Baker, McNeil, & Siryk, 1985).

Besides the aforementioned expectations, students initially overestimate their own abilities to adjust to their studies – academically, emotionally and socially (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).

Students who participated in this research confirmed the trends which have emerged in other studies. Since adjustment is such an important factor in the academic functioning of an individual, it is necessary to repeat these measurements after a certain period of time. Students will have more realistic expectations once they start doing their first assignments and commitments, gain more experience with the faculty staff and colleagues, get better acquainted with courses' contents, and after they receive first evaluations of their work. Repeated measures will provide a more realistic picture and identify those individuals that have a greater risk of maladjustment and quitting, which will, in turn, help create appropriate help and support.

The analyses did not show a significant difference in personality traits between students who chose to participate in the Student Mentoring Programme and those who chose not to participate, and this was contrary to our expectations because such differences were found in other research. Our results could have been caused by selection which took place during enrolment process, but also by selections during other stages of education. The lack of differentiation in basic personality traits between these two groups suggests a possibility for a more detailed research in the future, one which would include more specific traits, rather than just basic ones. According to Chao, Walt, & Gardner (1992), individuals who show higher extraversion are more likely to participate in a mentoring relationship, unlike those who show greater introversion; this can be explained through extraverts' orientation towards people and their need to understand the environment (Allen, Poteet, Russell, & Dobbins, 1997). According to Kram (1985, Waters, 2004), individuals who score high on agreeableness possess characteristics which are desirable for a person seeking mentoring – mainly because they are pleasant to spend time with, they are prone to compromise and agreements and are successful in solving conflict situations. Openness is a desirable trait for a mentoring relationship, especially in its components "openness to knowledge" and "openness to accept constructive feedback" – it also defines the type of the mentoring relationship, i.e. it sets the level of formality. Individuals who score higher on conscientiousness are more open to participation in mentoring programmes, more persistent and become more involved in the mentoring relationship (Waters, 2004).

According to the results of recent research on motivation, we assumed that students who decide to participate will show high fear of failure, low achievement

motivation and high perceived incompetence, as opposed to students who decide not to participate in the mentoring programme. Our hypotheses were partially confirmed. The analysis showed a statistically significant difference regarding fear of failure between students who decided to participate in the Student Mentoring Programme and those who decided not to participate. Students who decided to participate in the mentoring programme showed a significantly higher fear of failure in comparison to students who decided not to participate in the programme (Table 1). No statistically significant differences were found on other scales. In general, the data analysis reveals trends toward higher achievement motivation, lower fear of failure and low perceived personal (in)competence for the research sample.

Assessment of competence is primarily based on feedback which a person obtains from others during or after performing an activity. Information about success makes this assessment higher, while information about failure lowers the assessment; especially if this information arrives at the beginning of an activity (Kolić-Vehovec, 1999). Thus, the reason for higher assessments in our sample can be explained by initial experiences students had during this research, i.e. the time they have spent at the college so far. At the very beginning of college, students are still under the impression of the selection process and the fact that they successfully passed entry exams. This can explain a relatively higher sense of competence which was reported during the beginning of their first year of attending classes. However, after initial assignments and other tasks, as well as first evaluations of knowledge and skills, the notion of one's competence, i.e. sense of efficiency, may become lower.

Perceived competence does not have to be accurate. People often overestimate themselves, but they also sometimes underestimate themselves. Inaccurate estimation has unwanted consequences. If a person overestimates own abilities, they will experience failure more often; if they underestimate themselves, they will engage in activities that are not challenging enough. Such errors in assessing competence usually arise when there is no sufficient information about a new activity or when demands of a known situation are changed (Kolić-Vehovec, 1999). At the very beginning of their academic education, students often lack a proper insight into what is expected of them, which can result in an inaccurate perception of competence. This is the reason for repeated measurements after some time has passed, especially in order to identify individuals who are, because of their lower assessments, at risk for poorer adjustment or for quitting college.

The results of this research suggest that, out of all observed variables, fear of failure might be crucial in deciding whether to participate in the mentoring programme. Other research suggests that fear of failure inclines people to set such goals which lead to general avoidance of performing, which often leads to underachievement, quitting and loss of interest for all types of tasks (Roney, Higgins, & Shah, 1995). Although the reported fear of failure is relatively low in our research, students who develop a more prominent fear of failure can feel threatened with the beginning of college, and they

see mentoring offered by their senior colleagues as help and support in such situations. These students could benefit from achievement motivation training which leads to more realistic goal-setting, lower fear of failure, increased expectation of success, higher perception of personal competence and less negative attitude towards the academic environment (Kolić-Vehovec, 1999).

Students included in this research have generally shown a rather high level of motivation, which is considered a usual trend in the first year of college. A longitudinal study by Braten and Olaussen (2005) reported very high levels of motivation amongst freshmen in the initial stages, which then shows a decline towards the end of the first academic year; at the same time, students who report lower initial motivation tend to keep that level throughout the whole academic year.

In this research, the majority of students report a higher level of motivation for achievement, which can also be connected to their optimism after successfully enrolling into the college of their choice. It is also necessary to verify if this initial enthusiasm could be consequential to the lack of understanding of demands and commitments that follow during their academic education. Other research shows that, after some time has passed and through interaction with the academic and social environment, the level of this initial enthusiasm decreases and that students adjust their motivation and expectations to realistic demands set by the academic environment (Braten & Olaussen, 2005). These authors also suggest that it is desirable for the college to be informed of their students' motivation and trends of motivational changes throughout the academic year, and throughout the whole academic cycle, in order to provide them with the environment and work methods which would be optimal for developing appropriate motivation (Braten & Olaussen, 2005).

Besides differences in their psychological characteristics, this research has analyzed whether resident and non-resident students differ in their decision to participate in the Student Mentoring Programme.

Table 2. A comparison of resident and non-resident students regarding their decision to participate in the Student Mentoring Programme: Chi-square results

| | Decision to participate in the Student Mentoring Programme | |
|---|--|--------|
| | YES (N) | NO (N) |
| Did not change their place of residence | 36 | 35 |
| Had to change their place of residence | 101 | 48 |
| | $\chi^2_{(1, N=220)} = 7.06; p < 0.01$ | |

The Chi-square test shows a statistically significant difference between students who did not change their place of residence and those who changed it in their decision to participate in the Student Mentoring Programme ($\chi^2_{(1, N=220)} = 7.06; p < 0.01$). The majority of students who decided to participate in the Programme were non-resident students (N=101, 73.7 %), unlike students who decided not to participate and are resident students (N=35, 42.2 %). Such results correspond to previous findings which

confirm that early identification and intervention related to separation problems, such as support network and peers, can make the adjustment easier in terms of increased self-confidence and better fitting in the academic environment (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994). Non-resident students are more likely to participate in the mentoring programme in order to lessen their separation problems and to ensure the support they need for a better adjustment.

The final goal of this research was to identify predictors for college adjustment. Using linear regression analysis, we found that personality variables, achievement motivation, perceived incompetence and the decision to participate in the Student Mentoring Programme can explain, in total, 51.1% of college adjustment variance. Significant predictors of college adjustment are: perceived incompetence, extraversion, agreeableness, and achievement motivation. These results are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of the linear regression analysis with college adjustment as the criteria.

| Criteria Predictor | College adjustment | | |
|---|--------------------|------|-------|
| | β | T | p(t) |
| Perceived incompetence | -0.469 | 5.19 | 0.000 |
| Achievement motivation | 0.172 | 2.43 | 0.016 |
| Fear of failure | 0.082 | 0.98 | 0.328 |
| Extraversion | 0.232 | 3.52 | 0.001 |
| Agreeableness | 0.152 | 2.68 | 0.008 |
| Conscientiousness | 0.095 | 1.33 | 0.185 |
| Neuroticism | -0.023 | 0.33 | 0.741 |
| Openness | -0.022 | 0.36 | 0.718 |
| Decision to participate in the mentoring programme | 0.002 | 0.03 | 0.977 |
| $R = 0.715$ $R^2 = 0.511$ $F(9,191) = 21.11 \quad p < 0.01$ | | | |

The initial perception of college adjustment is connected to low doubts in one's own competence and abilities, and at the same time, higher achievement motivation. Njus and Brockway (1999) also emphasize the importance of perceived competence. It is interesting to observe that the results of our research suggest that the initial adjustment is easier for those students who are more socially adapted and open for cooperation, while other research often relate later academic success with introversion (Chamoro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003). These findings can be explained by the operational definition of college adjustment in this research, which we defined through sense of satisfaction with the chosen study programme, relationships with colleagues and fitting in the academic environment. It is possible that a different operational definition of adjustment, one that emphasizes successful dealing with academic obligations, would see other personality traits as significant predictors, as other research suggest (Chamoro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003; Smojver-Ažić et al., 2007).

Our results point to the importance of motivational factors and personality traits in understanding student adjustment, and also offer guidelines for future research.

The results of this research can suggest which first-year student characteristics could act as protective factors in college adjustment, but those characteristics must also be additionally tested. After students begin to perform their first academic assignments and obligations, gain more experience with professors and colleagues, get better acquainted with courses and get first evaluations of their own work, they will have more realistic expectations of their own adjustment in the academic context. Such results will give a more realistic picture and identify those individuals that are at greater risk of poorer adjustment and quitting, and provide a better basis for adequate help and support.

Although this research has not revealed significant differences in the students' decision to participate in the mentoring programme for most of the tested dimensions, there are some signs of the characteristics of first-year students that require systematic support and help in their adjustment. Other research confirms the importance of mentorship which is connected with desirable behavioural outcomes, positive attitudes towards the academic life, positive interpersonal relationships, and positive motivational outcomes related to seeking new experiences, setting high but obtainable goals, and achieving outcomes that are important for individual's personality (Eby et al., 2007). Factors for quitting college encompass problems in academic, social and emotional adjustment. To reduce the risk of quitting, a formal and informal institutional support can be of great help - such as support groups, student counselling, mentoring systems, etc. (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994).

The results of this research should provide guidelines for the preparation of mentoring programmes. Existing mentoring programmes in higher education suggest teachers as mentors. In our programme mentors are students themselves, which has shown to be a rather positive solution. Senior students, acting as mentors, are closer to freshmen in terms of experience, ways of communicating and problems which they had to deal with. Therefore, they can provide positive emotional and social support. On the other hand, teachers as mentors can help with their professional competence and offer guidance regarding students' professional growth and development within the academic environment. Experience shows that a mentoring group should consist of both senior students and members of the faculty, so that it includes all aspects of adjustment.

The need for a mentoring system also depends on the degree of information students possess about the college, and on how demanding they perceive the college to be. Although this research included different college departments, it was conducted at only one (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences). A possible drawback of this research was also the lack of control of previous information students might have had regarding assignments and commitments, courses, etc. Future research should include these variables because they, among others, belong to environmental factors that help students create the perception of their own adjustment expectations and, accordingly, decide whether to seek help.

The mentoring systems represent a good practice that provides psychosocial support to students in their successful adjustment to the academic context. Despite the lack of research in this area, the importance of a mentoring system is evident, along with numerous positive outcomes it provides.

With an efficient mentoring system that corresponds to students' needs set as a goal, it is necessary to follow the tested participants up during their college education. It is possible that some of the students among those who initially decided not to participate in the mentoring programme would decide to participate in the mentoring programme eventually, after seeing the need for systematic support.

This research had a goal of determining the characteristics of students with regard to their decision whether to seek student mentor support. Future research could also explore characteristics of senior students who decide to be mentors for their younger colleagues, expecting that such experience would also help mentors themselves in their adjustment and enrich their competences.

Although the Student Mentoring Programme is just a first step in ensuring a positive academic climate, it is important that these student needs are recognized. It is a way to ensure conditions that would offer an individual a chance for better adjustment to the academic context and for the acceptance of an opportunity for personal and professional growth and development.

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Prilagodba studiju i programu studentskog mentorstva

Sažetak

Istraživanja potvrđuju kako je uspješan prijelaz u sustav visokog školstva tijekom prve godine studija pod utjecajem različitih individualnih i okolinskih faktora.

Cilj ovog istraživanja bio je usporediti studente prve godine koji su se odlučili za program studentskog mentorstva kao oblika pomoći u prilagodbi sa studentima koji se nisu željeli uključiti u taj program.

Ispitano je 230 studenata prve godine studija prosječne dobi od 19,02 godine. Analizirana je razlika u početnoj prilagodbi na studij, u osobnosti i motivaciji.

Većina ispitanih studenata navodi da su upisali studij koji ih zanima, uz očekivanje da će se nakon završetka izabranog studija moći zaposliti. Kao značajne prediktore prilagodbe na početku studija izdvojili su percepciju kompetentnosti, motivaciju za postignuće te ekstraverziju i ugodnost. Značajno više studenata koji su se odlučili sudjelovati u Programu mentorstva studira izvan mjesta prebivališta. Studenti koji žele podršku studenata mentora imaju značajno izraženiji strah od neuspjeha. Na ostalim ispitanim varijablama nije uočena statistički značajna razlika s obzirom na odluku za sudjelovanje u Programu mentorstva.

Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju na zaštitne faktore u prilagodbi studenata na početku prve godine studija i daju smjernice za razvoj mentorskih programa i daljnja istraživanja.

Ključne riječi: *ličnost; motivacija; percipirana kompetentnost; strah od neuspjeha*

Uvod

Početak studija označava prvu veću životnu prekretnicu u razdoblju kasne adolescencije i rane odrasle dobi koje za pojedinca donosi mnoge promjene i izazove novih životnih zadataka. Dolaskom na fakultet pojedinac se suočava s novim sustavom obrazovanja koje zahtijeva višu razinu znanja i kompetencija, raznovrsnije načine evaluacije i ocjenjivanja te višu razinu samostalnosti i odgovornosti studenata. U usporedbi sa srednjoškolskom studentska je populacija često heterogenija po kulturalnom i socioekonomskom porijeklu, a studijska je grupa nerijetko veća od

razrednog odjela. S ciljem umanjivanja nastalog raskoraka između srednjoškolskog i studentskog iskustva potrebna je prilagodba na novo okruženje te učenje ponašanja i vještina koje nova uloga nosi.

Prijelaz u sustav visokog školstva smatra se normativnim životnim događajem koji ovisno o individualnim i okolinskim čimbenicima rezultira različitim emocionalnom, socijalnom i akademskom prilagodbom (Gerdes i Mallinckrodt, 1994). Kao teorijska osnova u objašnjenju kvalitete prilagodbe fakultetskom okruženju može poslužiti nekoliko psiholoških razvojnih teorija koje se bave razvojem identiteta, kognitivnim, moralnim ili profesionalnim aspektom razvoja općenito. Teorija kojoj je najvažniji cilj bio objašnjenje razvoja studenata jest teorija Chickeringa (Evans, Forney i Guido-DiBrito, 1998), prema kojoj tijekom studentskog života mlada osoba razvija nove kompetencije, emocionalnu regulaciju, autonomiju i zrele interpersonalne odnose. Od studenata se očekuje razvoj identiteta i osjećaja svrhovitosti definiranjem životnih ciljeva i razvoj integriteta usklađivanjem vlastitih vrijednosti i ponašanja sa socijalnim odgovornostima (Evans, Forney i Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Chickeringov model razvoja studenata može poslužiti kao osnova razvoja strategija i programa namijenjenih studentima s ciljem što bolje prilagodbe i ostvarivanja vlastitog rasta i razvoja.

Prilagodba studiju ponajprije se povezuje s akademskim postignućem, premda se u analizi akademske prilagodbe može obuhvatiti ne samo potencijal koji student posjeduje već i njegova motivacija za učenje, osjećaj svrhe i zadovoljstvo akademskim okruženjem (Baker i Siryk, 1984, Gerdes i Mallinckrodt, 1994). Baker i Siryk (1984) osim akademske ističu i socijalnu prilagodbu koja obuhvaća prilagodbu socijalnom okruženju institucije, stvaranje novih socijalnih mreža, prepoznavanje i prihvaćanje socijalne podrške te emocionalnu prilagodbu koja se također pokazala važnom za prilagodbu fakultetu.

U istraživanju utjecaja okoline na razvoj studenata u posljednjih četrdesetak godina Newcomb i Wilson (1969, prema Evans, Forney i Guido-DiBrito, 1998) ističu da grupa utječe na pojedinca tako što mu pomaže u postizanju neovisnosti o roditeljima i obitelji, u postavljanju intelektualnih ciljeva koje postavlja institucija, u pružanju emocionalne i interpersonalne podrške te u svim onim područjima koje ne pokriva fakultetsko osoblje.

Među čimbenicima koji određuju prilagodbu studiju istraživači se bave problematikom promjene mjesta boravišta zbog odlaska na studij. Rezultati sugeriraju da se studenti koji studiraju izvan mjesta prebivališta suočavaju sa separacijskim problemima vezanim uz odlazak od kuće, što dodatno može otežati početnu prilagodbu akademskom okruženju. Rana identifikacija i intervencija vezana uz separacijske probleme, kao što je npr. mreža podrške i vršnjaci, mogu olakšati prilagodbu pojedinca u smislu povećanja samopouzdanja i uklapanja u akademsku sredinu (Gerdes i Mallinckrodt, 1994).

U razmatranju odrednica uspjeha na studiju u istraživanjima se potvrđuje povezanost pojedinih osobina pojedinca s prilagodbom akademskom okruženju. Tako se

primjerice ekstraverzija smatra poželjnom osobinom na nižim razinama obrazovanja, dok na višim razinama koje zahtijevaju analitičke, formalne i kompleksnije zadatke postaje ometajući faktor u prilagodbi (Chamoro-Premuzic i Furnham, 2003). Pojedinci s visokim rezultatom na dimenziji neuroticizma skloniji su lošijoj prilagodbi, dok o značajnoj povezanosti faktora ugodnosti i akademskog uspjeha ne postoje empirijski dokazi, premda bi se ta osobina mogla povezati s boljom socijalnom prilagodbom (Chamoro-Premuzic i Furnham, 2003). Savjesnost je najvažniji korelat akademskom uspjehu, pri čemu je kao osobina poželjna na svim razinama obrazovanja (Chamoro-Premuzic i Furnham, 2003, Smojver-Ažić i sur., 2007).

Prilagodba studiju povezana je i s razinom motivacije studenata. U akademskom okruženju studenti nisu uvijek na najvišoj razini motiviranosti, ali ono što se želi postići jest da pojedinac pozitivno vrednuje učenje i da akademske aktivnosti smatra važnima i korisnima, pri čemu se smanjuje vjerojatnost frustracija i odustajanja od studija. Osoba s izraženom *motivacijom za postignućem* za cilj će izabrati visoko akademsko postignuće i angažirati se u učenju i izvršavanju zadataka. Za neke osobe situacija postignuća ne predstavlja izazov, već je percipiraju kao prijatnu. Kod takvih je osoba dominantan *motiv za izbjegavanje neuspjeha* koji se manifestira kao *strah od neuspjeha* u situacijama postignuća. Osobe s jakim motivom za izbjegavanje neuspjeha najradije će izbjegavati situacije postignuća (Kolić-Vehovec, 1999). Takva predispozicija svakako je otežavajući čimbenik u prilagodbi studenata na kontekst visokoškolskog obrazovanja jer su situacije u kojima se zahtijeva angažman koji dovodi do postignuća svakodnevno prisutne.

U istraživanju Njusa i Brockwaya (1999) pokazuje se da je percepcija kompetentnosti značajno povezana s prilagodbom studenata. Percipirana kompetentnost podrazumijeva doživljaj spremnosti za djelotvornu interakciju s okolinom. Kako je početak studija većini studenata stresan događaj koji predstavlja novu i nepoznatu situaciju, uz osjećaj nesigurnosti i ugroženosti, pretpostavlja se da će strah od neuspjeha, motiv za postignućem i percepcija kompetentnosti biti važni čimbenici prilagodbe.

Osim razmatranja individualnih obilježja studenata važnim korelatom prilagodbe studiju smatra se i sustav formalne i neformalne podrške. Mentorstvo predstavlja oblik formalne podrške i najčešće podrazumijeva podršku iskusnijeg pojedinca manje iskusnom pojedincu ili grupi s ciljem poboljšanja osobne i profesionalne dobrobiti pojedinca (Jacobi, 1991). Iako su programi mentorstva zastupljeni unutar institucija visokog školstva ili radnih organizacija, još uvijek je malo empirijskih podataka, a u skladu s tim i teorijskih okvira vezanih uz područje mentorstva (Eby i sur, 2007).

U Hrvatskoj je sustav mentorstva u sustavu visokog školstva još uvijek nedovoljno zastupljen, što je razvidno i u nedovoljno diferenciranoj terminologiji. Mentorom se najčešće smatra osoba koja je zadužena za pomoć studentu u kontekstu izrade diplomskog ili doktorskog rada, osoba u znanstveno-nastavnom zvanju i ekspert za područje u okviru kojega student prijavljuje završni rad ili doktorsku disertaciju.

Prema Zakonu o visokim učilištima iz 1996., mentor vodi kandidata kroz studij, prati njegov rad i izvršenje obveza, usmjerava ga i procjenjuje kandidatov napredak. Naziv za osobu koju mentor vodi ne postoji, pa nisu definirane ni obveze ni prava koje takva uloga podrazumijeva. Iako je nedostatak terminologije vezane uz mentorstvo možda jedan od pokazatelja nedovoljne zastupljenosti mentorskih programa u nas, to nikako ne umanjuje važnost mentorskog sustava. Sustav mentorstva predstavlja jedan od oblika psihosocijalne i profesionalne podrške na različitim institucionalnim razinama i omogućuje osobni i profesionalni rast i razvoj mentora i osobe koju vodi (Eby i sur., 2007). U navedenom kontekstu mentorski programi predstavljaju vrlo uspješan sustav podrške u prilagodbi studenata visokoškolskom obrazovanju, posebno na početku studija.

U literaturi se ističu različite vrste mentorstva. S obzirom na ciljanu skupinu razlikuje se mentorstvo dječje populacije, akademsko mentorstvo i mentorstvo u radnoj okolini. Akademsko mentorstvo definira se kao odnos člana akademske zajednice i studenta, pri čemu mentor studentu pruža podršku i usmjerava ga na akademskom (npr. akademska izvedba) i na privatnom području (npr. osobni problemi, identitet) (Jacobi, 1991; Eby i sur., 2007). S obzirom na strukturiranost, razlikuje se formalno i neformalno mentorstvo (Underhill, 2006). Formalni oblici sustava mentorstva vrlo često prepoznaju studente koji imaju veći rizik za negativnim ponašanjima vezanim uz studij, kao npr. odustajanje od studija (Eby i sur., 2007). Pokazalo se da je mentorstvo povezano s poželjnim ishodima u ponašanju, pozitivnim stavovima vezanim uz akademski život, pozitivnim interpersonalnim odnosima i s pozitivnim motivacijskim ishodima povezanim s traženjem novih iskustava, postavljanjem visokih, ali ostvarivih ciljeva te ostvarivanjem ishoda koji su važni za osobnost pojedinca. Mentor na temelju svog iskustva može studenta upoznati s raznim mogućnostima koje mu studij pruža, pomoći mu u postavljanju ciljeva, pružiti mu podršku i tako ga potaknuti i usmjeriti prema ostvarenju osobnog i profesionalnog rasta i razvoja.

Program studentskog mentorstva

S obzirom na to da su prijelazom na fakultet studenti suočeni s novim izazovima i razvojnim zadacima koji utječu na prilagodbu studiju, Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci je studentima prve godine ponudio Program studentskog mentorstva koji su pokrenuli studenti uz podršku nastavnika. Potaknuti brojnim problemima i nedoumicama s kojima se susreću studenti prve godine, osmišljen je sustav podrške koji bi trebao olakšati prilagodbu studiju i omogućiti doživljaj akademske sredine kao prostor za osobni rast i razvoj. Ideja programa jest pružiti podršku ne samo u akademskom već i u socijalnom i emocionalnom aspektu prilagodbe. Program je zamišljen tako da studenti viših godina budu mentori studentima prve godine. Mentori su radili s grupama do najviše četiri studenta prve godine.

Na početku Programa provedene su inicijalne radionice na kojima su se studenti upoznali s mentorskim sustavom, s postojećom praksom mentorskih sustava u

visokom školstvu i sa svojim pravima i obvezama. Unutar mentorskih grupa studenti su se upoznali, izmijenili očekivanja, definirali područja rada i dogovorili se o sljedećim susretima. Daljnji susreti zamišljeni su tjedno u trajanju od najmanje jednoga školskog sata, a moguća je i komunikacija elektroničkim putem. Zadatak mentorskih grupa je vođenje bilješki o načinu rada, pitanjima i problemima, s ciljem provedbe potrebnih prilagodbi mentorskog programa usklađenih sa specifičnim potrebama studenata.

U razmatranju doprinosa mentorstva podršci studentima u većini istraživanja riječ je više o pitanjima ishoda mentorstva za mentore i za pojedince koji imaju mentore. Ovo je istraživanje usmjereno na analizu karakteristika studenata koji imaju potrebu za mentorima na početku akademskog života s ciljem bolje prilagodbe studiju u odnosu na studente koji ne pokazuju potrebu za mentorom.

Osim toga, cilj je ovog istraživanja bio utvrditi stupanj prilagodbe studenata prve godine studija na Filozofskom fakultetu Sveučilišta u Rijeci, povezanost prilagodbe s motivacijskim varijablama i varijablama osobnosti te njihove doprinose objašnjenju prilagodbe studiju.

Metoda

Ispitanici

U istraživanju je sudjelovalo ukupno 230 studenata prve godine Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Rijeci (177 studentica, 52 studenta) u dobi od 18 do 23 godine, (prosječna dob 19,02 godine).

Opći podaci sadržavali su pitanja o razlozima upisa na studij, o mjestu prebivališta i njegovoj udaljenosti od mjesta studiranja. Ukupno 31,7% ispitanika (N=72) živi u mjestu studiranja. Ostali ispitanici, 68,3% (N=155) zbog studija su promijenili mjesto boravka. Analiza razloga upisa na studij pokazuje da većina studenata upisuje studij jer ih predmet studija jako zanima (81,7 %) i postoji veća mogućnost zaposlenja nakon studija (40,9 %). Kod studenata prevladavaju intrinzični motivi za upis na studij, što je dobra osnova za odgovarajuću prilagodbu studiranju.

Mjerni instrumenti

U istraživanju su korišteni sljedeći mjerni instrumenti:

1. *Upitnik općih podataka* sadrži pitanja o demografskim podacima: spol, dob, studijska grupa, mjesto prebivališta, mjesto boravka za vrijeme studija, razlozi upisa na studij te odluku o sudjelovanju u Programu studentskog mentorstva;

2. *Skala prilagodbe studiju* (SACQ; Baker i Syrik, 1984;) – korištena je verzija prilagođena hrvatskoj populaciji studenata (Živčić-Bećirević, Smojver-Ažić, Kukić i Jasprica, 2007) koja mjeri dimenzije akademske, socijalne i emocionalne prilagodbe studiju. Akademska prilagodba ispituje akademske ciljeve, stavove prema studiju, motivaciju, navike učenja i pohađanje nastave. Socijalna se prilagodba može procijeniti preko uključenosti u različite aktivnosti na fakultetu, razvoja i održavanja odnosa s kolegama. Kvaliteta emocionalne prilagodbe odražava u kojoj mjeri studenti

doživljavaju psihološke ili somatske simptome stresa. Za potrebe ovog istraživanja skala je skraćena na 20 tvrdnji, tako da ispituje sveukupnu početnu prilagodbu akademskom okruženju. Iz originalne su skale izbačene tvrdnje koje se odnose na akademsko djelovanje, o kojem studenti nemaju dovoljno iskustva na početku nastave. Procjene su na skali Likertova tipa od 9 stupnjeva. Viši rezultat znači bolju prilagodbu. Raspon rezultata dobiven u ovom istraživanju je od 53 do 174. Pouzdanost ove kraće forme skale iznosi 0,87.

3. *Inventar ličnosti BFI (Big Five Inventory; John, Dohane i Kentle, 1991)* – korištena je skraćena i prilagođena verzija upitnika petofaktorske teorije ličnosti koja pretpostavlja postojanje 5 crta ličnosti: ekstraverzija (8 čestica), ugodnost (9 čestica), savjesnost (9 čestica), neuroticizam (8 čestica) i otvorenost (10 čestica) (Kardum, Gračanin i Hudek-Knežević, 2006). Ukupno 44 čestice procjenjivane su na skali Likertova tipa od 4 stupnja. Raspon odgovora u istraživanju po subskali je unutar raspona od 5 do 36, pri čemu veći rezultat ukazuje na izraženiju crtu osobe. Na ovom uzorku dobivene pouzdanosti tipa unutarnje konzistencije (Cronbach alpha) pojedinih faktora iznose 0,84 za ekstraverziju, 0,74 za ugodnost, 0,83 za savjesnost, 0,83 za neuroticizam i 0,82 za otvorenost.

4. *Costellov upitnik motiva za postignućem (Lamovac, 1988)* – korištena je prevedena i prilagođena verzija (Kolić-Vehovec, 1993) od 16 čestica. Procjenjivanje je na skali od 0 do 4. Raspon odgovora dobiven u istraživanju je od 18 do 56, pri čemu veći rezultat ukazuje na izraženiju motivaciju za postignućem. Pouzdanost tipa unutarnje konzistencije (Cronbach alpha) dobivena na ovom uzorku iznosi 0,75, što je u skladu s pouzdanošću dobivenom na studentskoj populaciji.

5. *Skala nekompetentnosti (Bezinović, 1988)* sastoji se od 10 tvrdnji; procjenjivanje je na skali Likertova tipa od 0 do 3, raspon odgovora u istraživanju je od 0 do 34, pri čemu veći rezultat označava veću sumnju u vlastitu kompetentnost i sposobnost. Na ovom uzorku dobivena pouzdanost tipa unutarnje konzistencije (Cronbach alpha) iznosi 0,91.

6. *Skala straha od neuspjeha (SON, Kolić-Vehovec, 1993)* sastoji se od 15 čestica; procjene su na skali Likertova tipa od 0 do 4. Raspon odgovora dobiven u istraživanju je od 0 do 51, pri čemu veći rezultat ukazuje na veći stupanj straha od neuspjeha. Pouzdanost tipa unutarnje konzistencije (Cronbach alpha) dobivena na ovom uzorku iznosi 0,90.

Postupak istraživanja

Tijekom prvog tjedna nastave studenti prve godine svih studijskih grupa upoznati su s Programom studentskog mentorstva. Nakon usmenog predstavljanja glavnih smjernica Programa studentskog mentorstva studenti su dobili i sažetak smjernica programa u pisanom obliku uz mogućnost odabira žele li sudjelovati u programu studentskog mentorstva. Studentima je objašnjeno da je glavni cilj programa pružanje podrške studenata viših godina studija studentima prve godine, čime bi im se olakšao početak akademskog života.

Ispitivanje studenata provedeno je tri do četiri tjedna nakon početka nastave. Upitnici su primjenjivani grupno na početku, nakon ili u pauzi tijekom predavanja. Svi su ispitani studenti bili upoznati sa svrhom istraživanja, načinom ispunjavanja upitnika i etikom anonimnosti podataka. Ispitivanje je za svaku studijsku grupu trajalo između 20 i 30 minuta.

Rezultati i diskusija

Od ukupno 230 ispitanika njih 137 (59,56%) odlučilo je sudjelovati u Programu studentskog mentorstva. O odluci za sudjelovanje u Programu nije se izjasnilo 10 ispitanika pa su daljnje analize provedene na uzorku od 220 ispitanika. Deskriptivni podaci svih korištenih mjera za skupinu ispitanika koji su odlučili sudjelovati u Programu studentskog mentorstva i onih koji nisu bili zainteresirani za sudjelovanje nalaze se u Tablici 1.

Tablica 1.

Prilagodba studiju ne razlikuje se kod studenata koji su se odlučili za program mentorstva i onih koji nisu, što se može objasniti relativno dobrom prilagodbom na početku studiranja. Istraživanja su pokazala da na početku studiranja većina studenata ima nerealna očekivanja od akademskog okruženja (Gerdes i Mallinckrodt, 1994). Takav zanosni idealizam definira se kao *mit o brucošima* (Gerdes i Mallinckrodt, 1994) koji često dovodi do razočarenja kada se takva visoka očekivanja pokažu kao kriva. Studenti koji imaju nerealno visoka očekivanja skloniji su odustajanju od studija u odnosu na studente čija su očekivanja bliža realnoj situaciji (Baker, McNeil i Siryk, 1985).

Osim očekivanja, studenti na početku studija precjenjuju vlastite sposobnosti prilagodbe na studij, kako na akademskom tako i na emocionalnom i socijalnom planu (Gerdes i Mallinckrodt, 1994).

Studenti ispitani u ovom istraživanju potvrđuju trendove koji su se pokazali u dosadašnjim istraživanjima. Kako je prilagodba vrlo važan čimbenik u akademskom funkcioniranju pojedinca, nužno je isti uzorak ponovno ispitati nakon određenog vremena. Nakon što student započne izvršavati prve akademske zadatke i obveze, stekne više iskustva u odnosu s nastavnicima i vršnjacima, bolje upozna nastavne sadržaje i prođe prve evaluacije svoga rada, imat će realnija očekivanja vlastite prilagodbe u akademskom kontekstu. Takvi će rezultati pružiti realniju sliku i identificirati pojedince kod kojih je vjerojatnost rizika slabije prilagodbe i odustajanja od studija veća te, u skladu s tim, pružiti pojedincu odgovarajuću pomoć i podršku.

Analize nisu potvrdile postojanje statistički značajnih razlika u dimenzijama ličnosti s obzirom na odluku za sudjelovanje u Programu studentskog mentorstva, premda se, u skladu s rezultatima drugih istraživanja, to očekivalo. Navedeni nalazi moguća su posljedica selekcijskog postupka pri upisu na studij, ali i selekcija tijekom predtercijarnog obrazovanja. Nepostojanje statistički značajnih razlika u ispitivanim

skupinama ukazuje na to da nema razlika u osnovnim dimenzijama ličnosti, pa bi možda u budućim istraživanjima trebalo analizirati specifičnije osobine ličnosti. Prema Chao, Walt i Gardner (1992) pojedinci s izraženijom crtom ekstreverzije prije će se odlučiti na sudjelovanje u mentorskom odnosu od introvertiranijih pojedinaca, što se može objasniti i njihovom orijentacijom prema ljudima i potrebom za razumijevanje okoline (Allen, Poteet, Russell i Dobbins, 1997). Prema Kramu (1985, Waters, 2004), osobe s visokim rezultatom na dimenziji ugodnosti posjeduju poželjne karakteristike osobe koja traži mentorstvo, jer je s takvim osobama ugodno provoditi vrijeme, sklone su kompromisima i dogovoru te uspješno rješavaju konfliktnu situaciju. Dimenzija otvorenosti je poželjna za mentorski odnos u komponentama otvorenosti znanju i otvorenosti prihvatanju konstruktivnih povratnih informacija i određuje tip mentorstva, odnosno stupanj formalnosti. Pojedinci koji imaju izraženiju dimenziju savjesnosti otvoreniji su za sudjelovanje u programima mentorstva, ustrajniiji i ulažu više truda u mentorski odnos (Waters, 2004).

S obzirom na nalaze dosadašnjih istraživanja motivacije pretpostavilo se da će studenti koji se odluče za mentorstvo imati visoku razinu straha od neuspjeha i nizak motiv za postignućem te visoku percipiranu nekompetentnost za razliku od studenata koji odluče ne sudjelovati u sustavu mentorstva. Rezultati istraživanja djelomično potvrđuju postavljenu hipotezu. Na dimenziji straha od neuspjeha utvrđena je statistički značajna razlika između studenata koji su se odlučili za sudjelovanje u Programu studentskog mentorstva od onih koji nisu. Studenti koji su se odlučili za sudjelovanje imaju statistički značajno izraženiji strah od neuspjeha od studenata koji se nisu odlučili za sudjelovanje u Programu studentskog mentorstva (Tablica 1). Na ostalim dimenzijama nije utvrđena statistički značajna razlika. Općenito se u ispitanom uzorku može uočiti trend rezultata prema višoj motivaciji za postignućem, niži strah od neuspjeha te niska percepcija osobne (ne)kompetentnosti.

Procjena kompetentnosti primarno se temelji na povratnim informacijama koje se dobivaju od osoba iz okoline za vrijeme i nakon izvođenja neke aktivnosti. Informacije o uspjehu povećavaju procjenu kompetentnosti, a o neuspjehu je smanjuju, posebno ako se javljaju na početku aktivnosti (Kolić-Vehovec, 1999). Razlog visokim procjenama na dimenziji percipirane kompetentnosti može se objasniti iskustvom studenata u vrijeme provođenja istraživanja, odnosno vremenskom razdoblju koje su studenti proveli na fakultetu. Na samom početku studija studenti su još uvijek pod dojmom uspješnog upisa na fakultet i činjenice da njihove kompetencije iskazane na razredbenim ispitima zadovoljavaju kriterije koje postavlja visokoškolsko obrazovanje. To može pojasniti relativno viši osjećaj kompetentnosti iskazan u prvim mjesecima prve godine studija. No, nakon prvih obveza i zadataka, kao i nakon prvih evaluacija stečenog znanja i vještina, pojam o vlastitoj kompetenciji odnosno osjećaj uspješnosti mogao bi se smanjiti.

Percipirana kompetentnost ne mora biti točna. Osobe se često precjenjuju, a nekad se i podcjenjuju. Netočna procjena ima neželjene posljedice. Precjenjuje li se osoba,

češće će doživljavati neuspjehe, a podcjenjuje li se, angažirat će se u aktivnostima koje za nju nisu pravi izazov. Greške u procjeni kompetentnosti najčešće se javljaju kada nema dovoljno informacija o novoj aktivnosti ili kada se zahtjevi u poznatoj situaciji promijene (Kolić-Vehovec, 1999). Studenti na početku studija često nemaju dostatan uvid o tome što se od njih točno očekuje, što može rezultirati netočnom percepcijom kompetentnosti. Zbog toga je potrebno ispitati isti uzorak ispitanika nakon određenog vremenskog razdoblja kako bi se identificirali pojedinci koji su zbog lošije procjene podložniji riziku od lošije prilagodbe i odustajanja od studija. Rezultati ovog istraživanja sugeriraju da je od svih promatranih varijabli upravo strah od neuspjeha mogao biti ključan za odluku o sudjelovanju u programu studentskog mentorstva. Istraživanja pokazuju da strah od neuspjeha potiče osobe na usvajanje ciljeva općenito usmjerenih na izbjegavanje izvedbe, što često vodi do toga da pojedinci postižu rezultate ispod svojih mogućnosti, da brzo odustaju i gube interes kod svih vrsta zadataka (Roney, Higgins i Shah, 1995). Premda je izraženost straha od neuspjeha relativno niska, studentima s nešto izraženijim strahom od neuspjeha početak studija možda predstavlja prijetnju pa prepoznaju mentorstvo starijih kolega kao moguću pomoć i podršku u novoj i relativno nepoznatoj situaciji. Tim bi studentima mogli pomoći treninzi motivacije postignuća koji dovode do realističnijeg određivanja ciljeva, nižeg straha od neuspjeha, povećanja očekivanja uspjeha, više percepcije osobne kompetentnosti i manje negativnog stava prema akademskoj okolini (Kolić-Vehovec, 1999).

Jedna od specifičnosti uzorka ovog istraživanja je da su studenti obuhvaćeni istraživanjem pokazali općenito dosta visoku motivaciju, što je u skladu s trendovima na prvoj godini studija. Longitudinalna studija Bratena i Olaussena (2005) utvrđuje vrlo visoku motivaciju studenata na početku studija koja pokazuje opadajući trend do kraja prve godine, dok studenti koji su izvijestili o niskoj motivaciji na početku zadržavaju sličnu razinu motiviranosti tijekom cijele godine.

U našem istraživanju većina studenata na početku prve godine studija iskazuju visoku motivaciju za postignućem, što se vjerojatno također može povezati s njihovim optimizmom nakon upisa na željeni fakultet. Potrebno je provjeriti koliko je taj početni entuzijazam posljedica i nedovoljnog razumijevanja zahtjevnosti i obveza koje ih tijekom studija očekuju. Istraživanja pokazuju da se nakon nekog vremena, u interakciji s akademskom i socijalnom okolinom, razina početnog entuzijazma smanjuje i studenti vlastitu motivaciju i očekivanja prilagođuju realnim zahtjevima koje pred njih postavlja akademska okolina (Braten i Olaussen, 2005). Navedeni autori također sugeriraju da je poželjno da su nastavnici upoznati s motivacijom studenata i trendovima promjene motivacije kroz akademsku godinu, odnosno kroz studij i osigurati im okolinu i način rada koji će biti optimalan za razvoj odgovarajuće razine motivacije (Braten i Olaussen, 2005).

Osim analiziranih psiholoških obilježja ispitano je razlikuju li se studenti u odluci o sudjelovanju u Programu studentskog mentorstva s obzirom na to jesu li zbog studija promijenili mjesto boravka.

Tablica 2.

Hi-kvadrat testom utvrđena je statistički značajna razlika između studenata koji su se odlučili za sudjelovanje u Programu studentskog mentorstva s obzirom na promjenu mjesta boravka zbog studija ($\chi^2_{(1, N=220)} = 7.06; p < 0,01$). Većina studenata koja se odlučila za sudjelovanje u Programu zbog studija je promijenila mjesto boravka ($N=101, 73,7\%$), za razliku od studenata koji se nisu odlučili za Program i koji uglavnom studiraju u mjestu boravka ($N=35, 42,2\%$). Takvi rezultati u skladu su s nalazima koji potvrđuju da rana identifikacija i intervencija vezana uz separacijske probleme, kao npr. mreža podrške i vršnjaci, mogu olakšati prilagodbu pojedinca u smislu povećanja samopouzdanja i uklapanja u akademsku sredinu (Gerdes i Mallinckrodt, 1994). Studenti koji studiraju izvan mjesta prebivališta više se odlučuju za Program studentskog mentorstva, kako bi ublažili separacijske probleme vezane uz odlazak od kuće i osigurali si podršku s ciljem što bolje prilagodbe.

Konačni cilj istraživanja bio je utvrditi prediktore prilagodbe na studij. Linearnom regresijskom analizom utvrđeno je da varijable ličnosti, motivacija za postignućem, percipirana nekompetentnost i odluka za sudjelovanje u Programu studentskog mentorstva mogu objasniti ukupno 51,1% varijance prilagodbe na studij. Kao značajni prediktori prilagodbe na studij izdvajaju se: percipirana nekompetentnost, ekstraverzija, ugodnost i motivacija za postignućem. Dobiveni su rezultati prikazani u Tablici 3.

Tablica 3.

Početni doživljaj prilagodbe na studij povezan je s niskim sumnjama u vlastitu kompetentnost i sposobnosti, uz istovremeno veću motivaciju za postignućem. Njus i Brockway (1999) također ističu važnost percipirane kompetentnosti. Zanimljivo je uočiti da rezultati našeg istraživanja sugeriraju da je početna prilagodba lakša studentima koji su društveniji i skloniji suradnji s drugima, dok istraživanja nerijetko povezuju kasniji uspjeh na studiju s introverzijom (Chamoro-Premuzic i Furnham, 2003). Ti se rezultati mogu objasniti operacionalizacijom prilagodbe na studij u našem istraživanju, kada je veći naglasak na doživljaju zadovoljstva s upisanim studijem i odnosom s kolegama i dobrim uklapanjem u fakultetsko okruženje. Moguće je da će se uz drugačiju operacionalizaciju prilagodbe, s većim naglaskom na uspjehu u ispunjavanju akademskih obaveza, kao prediktori izdvojiti druge osobine ličnosti, u skladu s rezultatima drugih istraživanja (Chamoro-Premuzic i Furnham, 2003, Smojver-Ažić i sur. 2007)

Dobiveni podaci upućuju na važnost motivacijskih faktora i dimenzija ličnosti u razumijevanju prilagodbe studenata te postavljaju smjernice za daljnja istraživanja.

Rezultati istraživanja mogu sugerirati koje bi karakteristike studenata prve godine studija mogle biti zaštitni faktori u prilagodbi, no svakako je te karakteristike potrebno naknadno ispitati. Nakon što studenti počnu izvršavati svoje prve akademske zadatke i obveze, steknu više iskustva s nastavnicima i vršnjacima, bolje upoznaju

sadržaje predmeta i dožive prve evaluacije svog rada, imat će realnija očekivanja vlastite prilagodbe akademskom kontekstu. Takvi će rezultati pružiti realniju sliku i identificirati pojedince kod kojih je vjerojatniji rizik slabije prilagodbe i odustajanja od studija, pa će se u skladu s tim pojedincu moći dati odgovarajuća pomoć i podrška.

Iako u ovom istraživanju nisu utvrđene statistički značajne razlike u odnosu na odluku studenata o sudjelovanju u Programu studentskog mentorstva na većini ispitanih dimenzija, postoje naznake koje su karakteristike studenata prve godine kojima je potrebna sustavna podrška i pomoć u prilagodbi. Dosadašnja istraživanja potvrđuju važnost mentorstva koje je povezano s poželjnim ishodima ponašanja, pozitivnim stavovima vezanim uz akademski život, pozitivnim interpersonalnim odnosima i s pozitivnim motivacijskim ishodima povezanim s traženjem novih iskustava, postavljanjem visokih ali ostvarivih ciljeva i ostvarivanjem ishoda važnih za pojedinca (Eby i sur., 2007). Faktori odustajanja od studija obuhvaćaju probleme akademske, socijalne i emocionalne prilagodbe. Smanjenju rizika od odustajanja od studija uvelike može pomoći formalna i neformalna institucionalna podrška, npr. grupe podrške, studentsko savjetovalište, sustavi mentorstva i sl. (Gerdes i Mallinckrodt, 1994).

Rezultati istraživanja trebali bi dati smjernice u pripremi mentorskih programa. Postojeći mentorski programi u visokom školstvu predlažu nastavnike kao mentore. U ovom Programu mentori su sami studenti, što se pokazalo pozitivnim rješenjem. Naime, studenti viših godina kao mentori studentu prve godine bliži su po iskustvu, načinu komunikacije i problemima s kojima su se susreli pa mu mogu dati pozitivnu emocionalnu i socijalnu podršku. S druge strane, nastavnik kao mentor može pomoći svojim stručnim kompetencijama i usmjeravanjem studenta u njegovu profesionalnom rastu i razvoju u akademskoj sredini. Prema dosadašnjim iskustvima, mentorska bi grupa trebala okupiti i studente viših godina i nastavnike pa bi se tako obuhvatili svi aspekti prilagodbe.

Potreba za mentorskim sustavom ovisi i o stupnju informiranosti studenata o studiju i o percepciji zahtjevnosti studija. Iako su ovim istraživanjem bile obuhvaćene različite studijske grupe, istraživanje je provedeno na jednom fakultetu. Jedan od mogućih nedostataka je i što nije kontroliran prethodni stupanj informiranosti studenata, odnosno koliko su studenti upoznati s npr. akademskim zadacima i obvezama, nastavnom građom i dr. U sljedećim bi istraživanjima svakako trebalo uzeti u obzir navedene varijable, jer su one, između ostalih, okolinski faktori na temelju kojih student stvara percepciju vlastite očekivane prilagodbe i u skladu s tim donosi odluku o traženju pomoći.

Sustav mentorstva predstavlja dobru praksu koja pruža psihosocijalnu podršku studentima u njihovoj uspješnoj prilagodbi na visokoškolski kontekst. Unatoč nedostatku istraživanja na ovome području, ipak se pokazala važnost sustava mentorstva uz brojne pozitivne ishode koje on donosi.

S ciljem razrade djelotvornog mentorskog programa usklađenoga s potrebama studenata potrebno je isti uzorak ispitanika pratiti tijekom studija. Ponovnim

ispitivanjem za Program mentorstva mogli bi se odlučiti i studenti koji to nisu učinili na početku studija, a poslije su uočili potrebu za sustavnom podrškom.

Ovo je istraživanje imalo cilj utvrditi obilježja studenata s obzirom na odluku o traženju podrške studenata mentora. Buduća bi se istraživanja mogla pozabaviti i obilježjima studenata viših godina studija koji se odlučuju da budu mentori mlađim kolegama, s očekivanjem da to iskustvo pomogne i njihovoj prilagodbi na studij i upotpuni njihove kompetencije.

Iako je Program studentskog mentorstva samo prvi korak u osiguranju pozitivne akademske atmosfere, važno je da su potrebe studenata prepoznate. Tako se osiguravaju uvjeti koji će omogućiti pojedincu bolju prilagodbu kontekstu visokog školstva i prihvaćanje tog programa kao prilike za osobni i profesionalni rast i razvoj.